

Marin County High Schools
Automotive Technology Advisory Committee

Minutes of the Meeting

DATE: May 4, 2017
TIME: 6:00 to 8:00 PM
PLACE: Terra Linda High School Auto Shop & Classroom

1. Welcome & Introductions

Katy Dunlap, Mike Grant

Rey Mayoral, Acting Assistant Principal of Terra Linda High School, welcomed the advisors on behalf of Principal Katy Dunlap. He emphasized that he recognized the importance of Career Technical Education (CTE) in opening career pathways for students and mentioned his own experience in high school auto tech.

Mike Grant, Director of the Marin County Office of Education, described his role as manager of the County's Regional Occupational Programs and welcomed the participants.

We went around the room and introduced ourselves:

Ron Davis, Auto Tech instructor, Marin ROP (San Rafael HS)
Mike Gomez, Owner/Operator of Gomez Automotive
Frank Wilcox, Technician, A & A Automotive
Rosie Cadoux, Office Manager, A & A Automotive
Dave Wendt, Store Manager of NAPA Auto Parts
Steven Horgan, Owner/Operator of Horgan's Transmissions
Don Zarraonandia, Maintenance Analyst, Chevron Richmond Refinery
Dan Silin, Auto Tech instructor, Marin ROP (Terra Linda HS)
Araceli Nunez, School to Career Coordinator, Marin County Office of Education
Jesse Madsen, Career Pathways Coordinator, Marin County Office of Education
Brian Scott, Heavy Equipment Mechanic, County Garage
Greg Khari, Service Manager, Lexus of Marin
Dave Del Grande, Auto Tech Instructor, College of Marin
Former Supervisor, San Francisco Central Shops
George Hritz, Director, Automotive Technician Training Standards
Former Instructor, College of Marin and San Marin High School
Former President, California Automotive Teachers
Secretary, Automotive Business Coalition
Vincent Van Hoven, Technician, Mercedes-Benz of Marin
Father of TL auto tech student

As the introductions proceeded, a number of participants expressed the conviction that the industrial arts and mechanical trades could make viable careers for many young people who, unfortunately, are unaware of such opportunities and probably steered away from them by their parents.

I believe everyone was impressed by the wealth of experience and expertise represented by the individuals in the room. In particular, the educators tried to express their gratitude toward the industry reps who had volunteered to support us.

2. Advisory Committee Objectives, Goals and Guidelines Mike Grant

Mike described a growing recognition of the importance of CTE in bringing greater relevance to education. As such, the voice and experience of industry representatives in advisory committees is needed to reinvigorate our programs. CTE programs must attempt to align training programs with industry needs, as Jesse Madsen pointed out.

The handbook provided to participants includes a set of proposed “Guidelines” designed to be relatively informal, some background information on our high school automotive programs, sections for Agendas and Minutes and some additional documents. Dan Silin described these documents: an outline of NATEF recommendations for advisory committees, an Advisory Committee Manual from the California Department of Education and an Automotive Technician Training Standards (ATTS) Program Inspection document.

Mike emphasized that a strong advisory committee needs a Chairperson from industry rather than from education. So he asked the participants to consider whether they might want to serve. Dan offered to serve as acting secretary and to write up the minutes of the meetings.

3. Internship Programs Araceli Nunez

Mike introduced Araceli Nunez, School to Career Industry Liaison, who described the internship program she coordinates. Students who take the initiative to sign up for the program are assigned to workplaces where they commit to 54 hours at about 6 to 8 hours per week. A job search class may also be part of the program, especially for students who enroll in the summer. A & A Automotive has hosted interns in the past. We encourage other shop owners and managers to consider participating in the future.

4. History of Marin County High School Automotive Programs Ron Davis

Ron shared background information about the high school automotive programs in Marin County. In his memory, there were five high school programs, each offering five periods of auto shop. San Rafael High School had an evening program as well. We now have only four schools, each offering only two periods of auto tech.

5. Terra Linda High School’s Auto Tech Program Dan Silin

Dan reported on the Terra Linda program, which he has operated for nine years and which has achieved ATTS certification. He reported that both Marin County Office of Education and San Rafael City Schools have been supportive, allowing him to purchase approximately \$6,000 worth of equipment annually for the past few years.

Each year, a few of his students earn college credit with a B grade or better, based on the “articulation agreement” between SRCS and College of Marin. He looks forward to working with COM’s Marc Woerlein to help more students earn this credit in the future.

Mike Grant described “a – g requirements” and the process that gives a University of California stamp of approval to high school courses that meet their standards for college prep. Earning such approval would be good for our programs and our students. Dan recently submitted a description of his class. Although it was rejected, suggestions for improvements were provided that may allow us to earn this approval in the future.

6. San Rafael High School's Auto Tech Program

Ron Davis

Ron described the San Rafael High program. His students are currently working on preparing a vehicle for the "May Madness" event in San Rafael. Mike Grant described his recent visit to Ron's shop and remarked that the students really came to life and were engaged when working in the shop. Ron and Mike also mentioned how the students perked up their ears when Ron mentioned that Golden Gate Transit was hiring diesel techs right now at a very nice salary.

Mention was also made of the Tamalpais High School program where longtime teacher Lisa Miller is retiring at the end of the year. Mike made it clear that both MCOE and the Tam District were committed to continuing this program.

Dan Silin remarked that he had recently visited the San Marin High School program where he was impressed with instructor Tim Blok's knowledge and experience.

7. Certification (Automotive Technician Training Standards)

George Hritz

The nationwide affiliate of ASE that evaluates and certifies automotive technician training programs is called NATEF (National Automotive Technician Education Foundation). George described how difficult it became to earn this certification, especially for high school programs, given the number of student hours required. Several years ago, he and other California automotive instructors approached NATEF with suggestions for rationalizing their program. When they balked at making any changes, the California Automotive Teachers organization along with the California Automotive Business Coalition formed ATTS (Automotive Technician Training Standards) as a substitute for NATEF. George is the Director of the statewide ATTS program.

Dan Silin's program at Terra Linda has been certified since 2010 and Lisa Miller's program at Tam High was also certified at one time. A student who has completed an ATTS certified program at the high school level should be able to perform in an entry-level position with significant supervision.

George also mentioned that the state has now authorized community colleges to begin to offer four year Bachelor degree programs in certain fields. Rio Hondo will offer a BS in automotive technology. Students who have completed an ATTS certified high school program would be qualified to enter this program.

George emphasized that the main benefit of achieving ATTS certification is program improvement!

Mike Grant affirmed that an industry-recognized certification is an important goal for any CTE program.

8. College of Marin Articulation

Marc Woerlein

Marc spoke about the College of Marin automotive programs (auto tech and collision repair). They are in the process of aligning their curriculum to NATEF standards. They are also working with Snap-on to train students in the use of their diagnostic tools.

Marc also described articulation efforts with the high schools. In two weeks, he will visit Dan Silin's classroom to help students register for College of Marin. This allows them to earn College credit for completing Dan's class with a B grade or better. Perhaps this could be done at Ron Davis's SRHS class as well.

Marc described the field trip Dan's students recently took to the College of Marin automotive programs. This was an optional field trip for which students arranged their own transportation. Dan reported that 12 current students, one former student and Vincent Van Hoven, father of one of Dan's students, attended the event. He thanked Marc for doing an excellent job as host and for showing us the machine tools, welding programs and classrooms as well.

9. Membership / Officers

Mike Grant emphasized that the most important aspect of an advisory committee is that educators hear from the industry reps (not just the other way round). He repeated that we intend to have an industry Chairperson and asked if there were any takers. Since no one volunteered, we agreed to put off nominations for Chairperson until next time.

10. Feedback from Members

Mike Gomez kicked off the members' discussion, introducing a theme that was subsequently echoed by others, namely the qualifications (or lack of same) needed for young people to succeed in the automotive repair industry. As he put it, some of the young people seeking employment at his shop are not just unemployed, they are "unemployable," due to a poor attitude, inability to demonstrate professionalism when talking to customers, a poor driving record or lack of basic skills. He emphasized that auto repair shops need to improve a sometimes poor public image and that he cannot afford to hire individuals who lack professionalism. As Richard Branson said, "hire for attitude and train for skill," not the other way round.

Rosie Cadoux seconded these observations, noting that some prospective interns didn't know how to shake hands or look someone in the eye, didn't come back after the first day or were unable to speak to customers when answering the phone. She did allow that appearances can be deceiving and that the young girl "with purple hair" turned out to be a human dynamo who was willing to work and eager to learn.

Greg Khari agreed that communication skills were important in order to satisfy the customers. Perhaps kids should take a public speaking class. He has many different positions to fill and can take kids at a lower skill level if they are willing to learn. The most important thing is to find the kid who is motivated to succeed. He or she can be trained.

Brian Scott mentioned that a young person who is committed to becoming a professional technician should be collecting his own tool set. Owning your own tools is a sign that you are determined to succeed in the trade. He also made the point that parents often discourage their kids from considering a career in the trades and that we need to enlighten parents about the good career opportunities in the motor vehicle service industry. Perhaps we could begin to do so during parents' back-to-school nights.

Vincent Van Hoven described the six week process including background checks before anyone can be hired at Mercedes-Benz. The goal is to find people who have a good record and a good character. ASE certifications are helpful in proving one's level of technical expertise.

Don Zarraonandia claimed that it took more like four to six months (!) before anyone would be hired at Chevron. He mentioned all the qualities that had been suggested before: employability, work ethic, clean driving record, ability to pass a background check, good communication skills, positive attitude, confidence, professionalism, education and experience. He also described how much Chevron emphasizes safety and recommended that high schools really emphasize training in this area.

George Hritz seconded the importance of convincing parents and counselors that career opportunities in the mechanical trades are worth considering. He drew attention to his recent article in the California Automotive Teachers Newsletter in which he described how "common assumptions about college, careers and pathways to success are outmoded because of the dramatic changes that have occurred in the labor market" and drew our attention to a "whitepaper" that "demonstrates the benefits and advantages of helping students pursue an occupation-driven education path beginning as early as middle school." He remarked he had seen data showing that many graduates of technician training schools are doing better than those from the top ten liberal arts universities.

George also echoed Ron Davis in describing how much auto technician training in the County has decreased since its heyday in the 70s and 80s, both at the high school and community college level.

Stephen Horgan emphasized the importance of internships. Young people need to work as apprentices to learn from experienced professionals.

Dave Del Grande reiterated the theme that a skilled tradesman can make a very good living. From garbage truck mechanic to supervisor (and educator), experience has been the greatest teacher. Kids need to be patient, develop a positive attitude and learn from their mistakes. They will not become skilled technicians overnight.

11. Set date, time, and place for next meeting

The next meeting will be held at San Rafael High School Auto Shop. Mike suggested an evening in early October, with specific date to be announced later (possibly Thursday October 9).

12. Adjournment

As the meeting adjourned, Dan invited the participants to walk through and inspect the Terra Linda High School auto shop.